

Third UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs highlights need to implement WHO Best Buys

Language English

During the second multistakeholder panel on partnerships for NCDs, the Minister of Health of Jamaica, Dr Christopher Tufton, led a physical activity break that showcased the 'Jamaica Moves' initiative to promote physical activity in the country. © WHO/UN

Exactly one week ago, a total of 76 countries made statements during the plenary segment of the third United Nations High-Level Meeting on NCDs (UN HLM on NCDs), held last Thursday 27 September at UN Headquarters in New York.

Many speakers called upon all countries to implement the WHO Best Buys, including those on taxation of unhealthy commodities, and to act on commitments made to reduce the preventable suffering and death due to NCDs. Governments also called for greater attention and action to address the commercial and social determinants of health, and to work with civil society. A summary of all statements is available [here](#) [1].

For a summary of some highs and lows of the HLM, please refer to the NCD Alliance's [initial reflection](#) [2] on the UN HLM on NCDs.

Over 100 side events took place during the high-level week of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly, many of which focused on NCDs and health. The NCD Alliance partnered with several organisations on a range of events, including the following:

- ***Time to Disrupt the Health Care System: Novel Solutions for Quality Care in the NCD Era***, Tuesday 25 September - led by the American Heart Association, this side event focused on highlighting the stories of people living with NCDs and how their challenges in accessing care at all levels led them to become advocates for stronger health systems. The event also featured a panel of health care professionals who identified how they were taking steps to strengthen health systems at all levels of care, and helped frame discussions for advocacy in advance of the 2019 UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage.
- ***Combating NCDs from the village to the UN: Integration of NCD Interventions into UHC***, Wednesday

26 September - co-hosted by the Government of Denmark, the Government of Kenya, and supported by the Danish NCD Alliance, the East Africa NCD Alliance, the NCD Alliance, and Novo Nordisk, this event highlighted the burden of NCDs in the East Africa region and discussed collaboration across sectors and regions for a reinvigorated and united response to NCDs as a priority for UHC and sustainable development. It explored opportunities and challenges of addressing NCDs as part of UHC, the roles and approaches of different stakeholders, and the meaningful involvement of civil society and people living with NCDs as part of the NCD response and the people centred care bedrock of UHC. The panel included the Hon. Ummu Mwalimu, Minister of Health, Community Development, Gender, Seniors and Children of Tanzania who shared the case of the Tanzania's Community Health Fund as an example of community risk pooling. The event was opened by Edward Konzolo of Stroke Kenya and NCD Alliance Kenya, who shared his stroke story and healthcare experiences, which helped frame the discussions on what can be done to capitalise UHC to address NCDs.

- **Accelerating Global Elimination of Cervical Cancer: A Call to Action**, Wednesday 26 September - led by the American Cancer Society, with involvement of UICC, NCDA, Together for Health and AdvaMedDx, this event followed on from the WHO Director-General's call for action earlier this year to accelerate the process of eliminating the disease. This event focused on multi-stakeholder coordinated action and efforts being made to increase access to HPV preventive vaccinations, screening and treatment, as well as innovative diagnostic testing to improve opportunities for the early detection and treatment of cervical cancer.
- **No Turning Back: Charting opportunities to invigorate and intensify the NCD response**, Wednesday 26 September - on the eve of the third UN HLM on NCDs, the NCD Alliance convened a high-level reception to celebrate how far civil society and partners have come in the NCD response. The event featured remarks from distinguished speakers including Ms Zoleka Mandela and the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness from Barbados, who highlighted the concrete actions his ministry and government is taking to further the NCD response both nationally and regionally. The President of Palau, H.E. Thomas Remengesau Jr., also made a guest appearance and demonstrated his commitment to tackling NCDs in the Pacific Region and to working with civil society.
- **Alliance for a positive ageing and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**, Thursday 27 September - Convened by the First Lady of Chile, this event highlighted the need for a lifecourse approach to NCDs and health that includes specific focus on the needs of older persons. Government speakers noted their efforts to ensure age-friendly cities, promote access to comprehensive and stigma-free health services, and to ensure the voices of older persons are meaningfully engaged throughout the policy cycle.
- **Alcohol, NCDs, and Sustainable Development**, Friday 28 September - Led by President Maithripala of Sri Lanka and reinforced by health agency representatives of Thailand and Lithuania, a call for a Framework Convention on Alcohol reached UNHQ during this side event, prompting many in the room to ask if the time has come for an international treaty on alcohol. Responding to the latest [WHO Global Status Report \[3\]](#) data revealing that harmful alcohol use has not reduced globally since 2014, Ministers of Health from Russia, Suriname, Slovenia, Philippines, Estonia, Sweden, and the WHO Regional Director for South East Asia made interventions reflecting the extensive harms they see from alcohol use and the need for coordinated regional and international action to address cross-border issues like taxation, trade and marketing, and to protect national alcohol control efforts. Notable was regular reference to interference of powerful industry stakeholders hindering policy implementation. The event also launched a new WHO-led initiative, [SAFER \[4\]](#), to help countries reduce the burden of alcohol-related harm.

During the UNGA week, several NCD and health-related initiatives and resources were launched, including:

- [NCD Countdown 2030 \[5\]](#)
- [WHO NCD Country Profiles 2018 \[6\]](#)
- [WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol 2018 \[3\]](#)
- [SAFER package to reduce harmful use of alcohol \[7\]](#)
- [Trouble Brewing - Making the case for alcohol policy \[8\]](#)
- [WHO's childhood cancer initiative \[9\]](#)
- [Global Coalition for Circulatory Health \[10\]](#)
- [NCD Alliance and Resolve to Save Lives partnership to eliminate trans-fatty acids \[11\]](#)
- [Taking Action on Childhood Obesity \[12\]](#)
- [Healthy Caribbean Coalition 10 Year Anniversary Report \[13\]](#)

Finally, the NCD Alliance and nearly 350 organisations and civil society experts released a statement in response to the Political Declaration of the 2018 UN HLM on NCDs, available [here \[14\]](#).

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- [3] <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/who-global-status-report-on-alcohol-and-health>
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- [11] <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/ncd-alliance-and-resolve-to-save-lives-partner-to-eliminate-trans-fatty-acids>
- [12] <http://ht.ly/e7KH30IZ68c>
- [13] <https://www.healthycaribbean.org/hcc-10-year-anniversary-report/>
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